1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

CHAPTER FOUR

Religious Beliefs and Practices

182 771 829 The lapse of many religious practices and the lessening of interest in those aspects of culture that we classify as religion were striking features of this dying society. Older informants remembered the time when there were ceremonial masks, the flute house, and other traits that are still found among certain tribes of the upper Xingú. Indeed, if it were not for Matiwana's unusual age, the Trumaí would be even more lacking in ceremonial knowledge. Yet there seems to have been little regret on the part of either the older or younger generations for this culture loss. They shrugged it off, saying that their grandfathers had had such [177] practices, but that they did not. This indifference is not too surprising, since much of their religion was borrowed from their upper Xingú neighbors not too long ago.[1]

771 105 Despite the decline in interest in the ceremonial cycle and the disappearance of certain religious traits, the main outlines of Trumaí religion were still observable in Quain's time. Shamanism was still practiced extensively, but it was simple both in form and supporting ideology. Ceremonialism was related to subsistence and curing. The shaman's individualized power resulted in a specialization of religious functions as did the individual ownership of ceremonial songs and dances. Some Trumaí, like old Matiwana, were better versed in the [193] religious rites than others, but they did not constitute a priestly class. While no one person interceded with the supernatural on behalf of the [182] whole village, the group ceremonials provided a focal point for social participation and village cooperation, and many of them were undertaken by the community for the benefit of all.

Shamanism

756 [184] The shamanistic art of curing was known and employed by nearly all the adult males of the village, and in this sense parallels the practices recorded among the Kamayurá by Oberg.[2] There is, however, a type

[1] Kamayurá ceremonial and religious life, much of which was once shared by the Trumaí, is discussed by Oberg (1953) and Galvão (1949, 1950). The extent of Trumaí culture loss can be roughly inferred from these sources and from the work of the earlier ethnologists.

[2] Oberg 1953, p. 60.

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SP23 Trumai SP23

796 He then started a song about the post in which he was joined by Nitvary
243 and the women. After two repetitions, the women poured a bowl of the
522 soup on Matiwana's head and shoulders, making a dripping mess of him. He retired amid general laughter. The second bowl of soup was then poured over the pole. A full explanation of the beliefs surrounding the *ole* posts was not obtained.

796 Due to the fact that Quain had only recently arrived in the village
243 when the ceremony was held, there is also a lack of clarity in the system
608 of relationships known as *ole aton*. The word "*aton*" means "pet" in Trumaí, but in the present context it applies to a temporary ceremonial identification between people, and between people and the *ole* posts. The
[571] interpersonal ties set up were only between persons of opposite sex. However, a man could have more than one woman for *aton*, and vice versa.

Kinship may be the determinant of these ties, but the data are inconclusive. Interestingly, the greatest number of *ole aton* relationships existed between people of the previously mentioned pairs of houses, suggesting a ceremonial reinforcement of this moiety-like arrangement.

Except for reciprocal gift-giving obligations, nothing is known of the behavioral roles called for by these connections. The owners of the *ole* posts were said to have their particular posts *for atons*. Their chief
[782] ceremonial duties were to peel and paint the pole, and supply it with
[778] food offerings. It may be hypothesized that the posts represent certain spirits with which individuals are identified, perhaps as the result of shamanistic experiences, as described by Oberg for the Kamayurá.[6]

796 During the *ole* ceremony, as during the cure described above, Quain
829 was impressed by the lack of interest in the proceedings. Those who
181 were not part of the immediate activity sat and smoked, indulging in the usual topics of conversation. The loose patterning and secularity which characterized the ritual bespoke the general lassitude that permeated all aspects of the culture.

The Piquí Ceremony

796 The *piquí (tsinon)* ceremony occurred at the end of the harvest of that fruit, during the first half of the rainy season. It was similar to the *ole* celebration, but not as lengthy nor as important. Quain's information on the festival, obtained from Aloari, is very limited. Jakwanari, the main functionary, occupied a position similar to that of Matiwana and Nitvary in the *ole* ceremony. As Aloari phrased it, "Jakwanari had *tsinon* as *aton*." There was house-to-house dancing by the women, accompanied by singing of a certain series of songs. At the end of the dancing Jak-
[262] wanari's wife made a large quantity of *t'ak*, the *piquí* flour cake, which

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 60.